



Committee on Homeland Security Democrats **Bennie G. Thompson, Ranking Member**

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HOUSE DEMOCRATS RAISE CONGRESSIONAL INQUIRY INTO SECURITY BREACHES AT CONGLOMERATE DATABASE FIRMS

WASHINGTON—Three House members today released a report on the need for strong federal laws to protect consumers from identity theft. The report, "Identity Theft and Terrorism," prepared by the House Homeland Security Committee, highlights the security gaps currently existing in consumer database companies and large financial institutions.

Representatives Melissa Bean (D-IL), Member of the House Financial Services Committee, Congressman Ed Markey (D-MA), Member of the House Committee on Homeland Security, and Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS), Ranking Member, House Committee on Homeland Security, requested the report because of the many security breaches reported over the past few months. Prominent data brokerage firms such as ChoicePoint and LexisNexis, as well as Bank of America, Citigroup, and a large credit card transaction processor, have potentially exposed the most private information of millions of Americans. This information can be used by would-be terrorists and other criminals looking to steal personal records either to commit identity theft, gain illegal entry into the United States, finance terrorist attacks, or pose other types of harm to innocent individuals.

Congresswoman Bean stated, "The crime of identity theft threatens not only an individual victim, but it also threatens the safety of all Americans when terrorists can use stolen personal financial data to aid an attack on our citizens. Congress must pass legislation that protects against the improper collection and sale of sensitive personal financial information and warns consumers when that information is at risk."

"Conglomerate databases are not fully securing Americans private information as they should," said Congressman Thompson. "With identity theft rising as the fastest growing and most profitable criminal act, it is urgent that these security lapses must be taken seriously and addressed in a timely manner. Congress must enact legislation that will hold conglomerate databases accountable for poorly managing and tracking their record systems as a first step to ensure that a consumer's most private information is not distorted and used for criminal intent," said Thompson.

Congressman Markey said, "I am concerned that recent heists of private information not only are a nightmare for the individuals affected, but also may have grave consequences for the security of our country. This report provides a comprehensive assessment of serious security breaches and their impacts, both on consumers and on our homeland security. We must not wait until the next hemorrhage of personal information exposes Americans' most private information to manipulation by data thieves or terrorists before we take action to establish tougher privacy protections. Increasing reliance on private data profilers, marketers and information brokers presents new challenges to the security of our personal information, and Congress should move quickly to pass pending legislation to tighten consumers' control over their own information," Rep. Markey said.

A copy of the report is attached

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